

PROGRAMME ON INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

# Study Visit to Canadian Universities: Diversity and Access in Higher Education

Following two successful study visits to higher education institutions in the United States and Western Europe, the OECD programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) organised a tour to English- and French-speaking universities in Canada from 5-12 October 2002. Senior managers from universities in South Africa, Turkey, Germany, Canada, Poland, and the UK, with tour guide Professor John Pratt from the University of East London, visited eight higher education institutions in two major cities in different provinces of Canada: Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Montréal, Québec. Nova Scotia, with 11 higher education institutions, is sometimes called Canada's education province. Québec has an area three times that of France, making it the largest of Canada's provinces. Of a total population of over 7 million, roughly 6 million are francophones and over 3 million live in Montreal.

This study tour offered the opportunity to explore a range of HE issues and management challenges. The themes identified for the tour included:

- ❖ Access and equity in higher education and related quality issues;
- ❖ Funding and governance structures: accountability and efficiency;
- ❖ IT in teaching and management: long term impact and optimal use;
- ❖ Internationalisation, globalisation and trade: threats and opportunities.

## Distinctive Institutional Missions

The most striking impressions for the participants on the tour concerned the maintenance of diversity in higher education, and the linked theme of accessibility. The institutions visited had distinctive missions. In Halifax, Dalhousie University, with 13,000 students, is the smallest of Canada's "big" universities, with a substantial research element. Mount Saint Vincent University was originally women only, but now has about 20 per cent male students, and is based on a strong liberal arts and science core. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design is a small mono-technic institution (about 900 students) but with an increasingly international reputation. Saint Mary's University is mainly undergraduate with faculties of arts, commerce and science, as well as continuing education and a special institute that supports multidisciplinary Canadian studies.

In Montréal, Québec, McGill is an old university offering research-based education whose main language of instruction is English. It offers over 300 programmes at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels. Concordia

University is the result of a merger in 1974 of two institutions and is a large urban university (about 30,000 students) set on two campuses. Concordia has four undergraduate faculties and also offers Master's, Doctoral degrees and graduate diplomas. L'École des Hautes Études Commerciales (HEC), a management school, part of the University of Montreal, is modelled on the *grandes écoles* in France, and located in an ultramodern building, with a computer and telecommunication infrastructure that allows for an integration of ICT into management studies. L'École de Technologie Supérieure at the Université de Québec (ETS) is part of the University of Quebec and specialises in technology transfer and offering students programmes intended to respond to industry needs.

## Embracing Difference with Enthusiasm

Participants on the tour felt that the institutions were accepting, even enthusiastic about their different functions to an extent that is not found in many other countries. In the UK, for example, a descriptor of a university as 'mainly undergraduate' - widely used in Canada - is as much an indicator of social as academic status. In part, the comfort with different missions in Canada may arise from the relative ease of recruitment of students. Although institutions compete in terms of reputation (with published ranking tables) none that were visited appeared to be struggling to maintain enrolment.

Another reason for this diversity is that Canada is a federation of ten provinces, and education is a provincial responsibility. The institutions visited appeared to identify with serving the needs of the province, although they also had Canada-wide recruitment and international programmes. The tour party felt that there was genuine co-operation between institutions. In Nova Scotia, for example, there has been some rationalisation of provision, to meet provincial needs. The provinces also have different funding policies, so that in Quebec, student fees for provincial residents are frozen at just under \$1700, considerably below the average (closer to \$3500) of other provinces.

## A Visible Concern for Access

There was a visible concern for access, too, even in research intensive institutions that were visited. It was manifested in different ways. Most institutions had developed or were developing distance learning programmes, usually (though not always) based on the Internet. Many saw this form of provision in terms of specific, even 'niche' markets. St. Mary's in Halifax, for example, is developing voice recognition software for deaf students. Interestingly, many institutions found that Internet-based programmes were used as much by full-time students on the campus as those remotely located, or the disabled client group. Again the

## Study Visit to Canadian Universities: Diversity and Access in Higher Education (cont.)

difference of location affected the form in which access was interpreted, with some institutions seeking to serve distant students in the province, and others focussed on increasing participation in the metropolitan area. Concordia makes no distinction between full-time and part-time programmes, so that full-time students often take classes in the evening, and many courses are offered twice in the week. Although most tuition is in English, students can submit work in French. The tour party felt that there was a genuine commitment to teaching in all institutions.

### Familiar Problems of Funding

It was, however, clear to the tour party that universities in Canada, like those in most OECD countries, face familiar problems of sustaining funding. The demand for higher education in Canada has risen and enrolment has grown to about 700,000 full-time students (in a population of about 30 million). Traditionally, universities were mainly private institutions, many with a religious affiliation. Today, there are about 100 universities, mainly publicly funded, complemented by some 200 technical institutes and community colleges. The provinces fund about 60 per cent of the costs of higher education, but this share has fallen in recent years. This is largely because of the demands of the health services, also a provincial responsibility. To an extent that surprised the tour party, higher education was seen as in direct competition for provincial resources with health services.

Some of the funding gap has been filled by substantial recent increases in federal funds, mainly for research, from a number of Federal ministries. Much also comes from

student fees which account for up to 30 per cent of the cost of operating funding in some institutions. The latter have risen by about 85 per cent in the last decade. Students also have to pay a range of additional costs for both social and educational services, to an extent unfamiliar in European institutions, which may equal the fee cost, as well as the costs of lodging. Several institutions visited have raised or are considering raising funds for capital projects through bond issues.

Despite the need to increase funding from other sources, few of the institutions visited saw 'entrepreneurial' activities as a major source of income, even though most of them were active in technology transfer and R and D activities. At McGill, for example, the long-standing and well developed Office for Technology Transfer, which costs \$1.5m annually to run, and which patents about 60 inventions per year, sees its function as much as a service to researchers as income generation.

According to the Association of Canadian Universities (AUCC) who made a presentation to the tour party, higher education in Canada is expected to expand by about 30 per cent over the next decade. This will place considerable stress on the institutions and their staff, the provinces, the Federal government, as well as students and their families. Yet, for all these difficulties, the tour party left with the sense that institutions were planning on a long-term basis and seeking to serve a variety of purposes in co-operation as much as competition. The future may be difficult, but they are thinking about it.

Professor John PRATT

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## Institutional Responses to Changing Student Expectations – The Asian Perspectives

IMHE member, the Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA) held a seminar on 1-3 August at Jeonju University in South Korea where seventy participants from eight countries/regions in Asia explored the issue of changing student expectations from an Asian perspective.

Keynote speaker Craig McInnis of the University of Melbourne discussed students' disengagement on Australian campuses. Their attitudes were described as a paradigm shift in how they perceived the purpose of a university education. Indeed, as David Suh of the Asian Christian Higher Education Institute said, the fundamental issue is the changing perception of the purpose of a university education. "How should the university respond when 72 percent of the students indicated that their purpose of attending university is to have respectable jobs?" Betty Abregana, from the same institute, viewed it

differently, and shared with the audience the 'push/pull' factors in the Philippines that lead students to be engaged or disengaged from their college education, and that clearly reveal the cultural differences between Asian and Western perspectives. For example, most undergraduate students study full-time and are supported by their parents or relatives: education is a family affair. This leads to another set of issues that affect students' expectations of their university education.

ACUCA President Edward Chen described the changing attitude towards university as a particular challenge to Christian higher education, which emphasises the process of education, community, and the interaction between students and faculty. One student put it this way: "Life in a university should not be a grim past that future leaders would dread thinking about...(the university should be) a place where they have walked, talked, and stumbled, but stood up again."

Wendy CHAN

## News from the Secretariat

The IMHE welcomes the following new members: Departament d'Universitats, Recerca i Societat de la Informació, Generalitat de Catalunya, Spain ♦ Ministry of Education, Finland ♦ University of Newcastle, and Victoria University, Australia

## Elsewhere in OECD

### New LEED Project: Research on Masters' Degrees in Local Development, Entrepreneurship and the Social Economy

The Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Programme is currently finalising its database on universities, research institutes and educational bodies that offer Masters Degrees or other curricula specifically related to local development, entrepreneurship and the social economy (non-profit sector). A new network will

soon be launched to link policy makers, practitioners and academics in these areas of study. This project is being carried out in co-ordination with the IMHE Programme. For more information, please contact [gabriela.miranda-gallardo@oecd.org](mailto:gabriela.miranda-gallardo@oecd.org)

## Publications of Interest

**Education at a Glance, OECD Education Indicators 2002**, OECD Publications, November 2002, ISBN 9264198903

The OECD education indicators enable countries to compare their performance to that of other countries. The 2002 edition is improved in three ways: it includes information from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) that provides comparable information on education outcomes and what shapes them; many more indicators now look beyond aggregate country performance to incorporation variations within countries that make it possible to examine issues of equity in education provision and outcomes; and the indicators are organised according to whether they address educational outcomes for individuals and countries, the policy levers or circumstances that shape these outcomes, or to antecedents or constraints that set the context for policy choices.

New information on student learning conditions, including the classroom learning climate and the use of information technology in education and teachers' working conditions provide a better understanding of what determines educational success. Eighteen non-member countries have also contributed this year, extending the coverage of some of the indicators to almost two-thirds of the world population. For underlying data, see

[www.oecd.org/els/education/eag2002](http://www.oecd.org/els/education/eag2002).

**Education Policy Analysis 2002**, OECD Publications, November 2002, ISBN 92-64-29930-0

This edition examines how OECD countries are multiplying the ways in which people can learn throughout their lives. It presents 8 closely-linked strategies for promoting equitable access to education for young children, examines ways to improve the quality and equity of education, drawing on data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment; addresses the penury of teachers and what policy choices can be made to redress this problem; considers the tertiary sector, and looks specifically at the rise of internationalisation (many issues in this chapter dovetail with those addressed by the IMHE Internationalisation and Quality Review programme) and revisits and the notion of human capital.

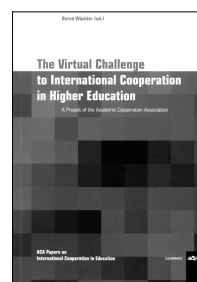
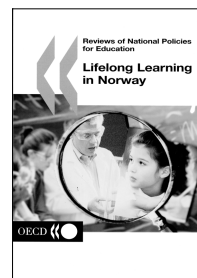
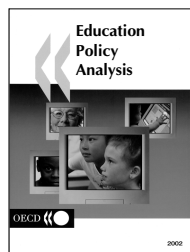
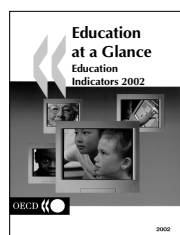
**Reviews of National Policies for Education: Lifelong Learning in Norway**, OECD Publications, November 2002, ISBN 9264197222

Norway is a test-bed for implementing a bold vision of lifelong learning, viewed as the next step for a highly developed country with a highly educated population, confronted with challenges of economic re-structuring, an ageing

workforce, the contradictions of labour shortages and increased leisure time, and an increasingly diverse society. But institutional arrangements and policies fall short of a systemic approach to lifelong learning, especially for adults where the issues concerning the governance and finance of adult learning are daunting. Leadership is vexed, because successful implementation depends on concerted action by several ministries and the social partners. The objectives of choice, equity and quality often conflict and difficult trade-offs must be resolved. The study includes a background report, prepared by the Norwegian authorities, and the OECD Examiners' report.

**The Virtual Challenge to International Cooperation in Higher Education**, ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education, Lemmens Verlag, 2002 ISBN 3-932306-40-6

The IT revolution is reshaping higher education and predictions are being made that the virtual university will replace the traditional brick and mortar institution. In all



cases, the IT drive will profoundly affect education and will most probably affect internationalisation in higher education. In a seminar held in the summer of 2001, the Academic Cooperation Association and the Norwegian Centre for International University Cooperation explored such issues as whether online learning will replace traditional international activities such as studying abroad, and whether curricular content and format will need to be internationalised.

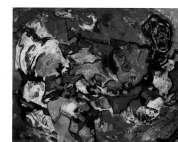
***As the Walls of Academia are Tumbling Down***, Werner Z. Hirsch, Luc E. Weber, editors, Economica, 2002 ISBN 2-7178-4439-2

Created in 1997, the Glion Colloquium brings together a group of leaders from higher education institutions from the United States and Western Europe to define, advance, and disseminate knowledge about the major issues facing research universities on these two continents.

This publication presents the papers given at the third colloquium, held on May 30-June 3, 2001, and others commissioned for the book.

As the Walls of Academia  
are Tumbling Down

Werner Z. Hirsch  
Luc E. Weber



ECONOMICA

## IMHE Calendar 2003

### 17 January

Second meeting of the Project task group for the IMHE/HEFCE activity on *Financial Monitoring and Effective Institutional Management*, Paris, France, by invitation.

### February (date to be announced)

Experts' meeting on *Higher Education and the Knowledge Society*, Paris, France, by invitation.

### 24-26 March

Seminar on *Investing Education Capital in IT and Physical Infrastructure*. Brisbane, Australia (organised by the OECD Programme on Educational Building).

### 28-29 April

OECD Forum, Paris, France.

### 16-17 June

Seminar on *External Funding, and University Autonomy*, (organised in collaboration with Nordic Rectors and Directors, NUS and NUAS), Oslo, Norway.

### 28-29 August

'What Works' in the *Management of Art Schools and other Specialised Institutions*, OECD, Paris, France.

### 12-17 September

IMHE/EUA Strategic Management Seminar (in English), Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany.

### October (dates to be announced)

◆ International seminar on *Financial Monitoring and Effective Institutional Management*, venue to be announced.

◆ Conference on *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Latin America*, venue to be announced.

### November (dates to be announced)

◆ Conference on *Funding and Governance in Higher Education*, Istanbul, Turkey.

◆ Study visit to Japan.

## Other Meetings of Interest

### 15-18 February

ACE 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, *Competition, Collaboration, Continuity, Change*, Washington, D.C. [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu)

### 23-25 June

Follow-up of the *World Conference on Higher Education, (WCHE+5)*, Higher Education Partners' Meeting UNESCO, Paris. [www.unesco.org/education/wche](http://www.unesco.org/education/wche)

### 26-29 August

WACE 2003, 13<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Co-operative Education, *Towards a Knowledge Society: Integrating Learning and Work*, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.  
[www.wacerotterdam2003.nl](http://www.wacerotterdam2003.nl)

### 18-19 September

*Bologna follow-up conference of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education*, Berlin, Germany  
[www.unige.ch/eua](http://www.unige.ch/eua)

### 3-4 November

Second OECD Forum on Trade in Educational Services, Norway.



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